

**Testimony of Mr. Pete Newell before the  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Amateur Sports Integrity Act  
(S. 718)  
April 26, 2001**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, my name is Pete Newell and I would like to thank you for inviting me to testify.

I have spent my life coaching the game of basketball. And I'm a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame. I've felt the joy of winning:

- the 1949 NIT championship,
- the 1959 NCAA championship,
- and coaching the 1960 Olympic Gold Medal team.

I'm grateful for the opportunities that the game has given me and my family.

I'm here today, to voice my strong opposition to the Amateur Sports Integrity Act. This legislation will not bring integrity to the game, but will only make the gambling problem worse.

As someone who has lived through the mistakes of the past, I don't want to see history repeated.

In 1949, when I was a young coach, I took my University of San Francisco team to the NIT in Madison Square Garden. I was there during that era to witness the terrible point-shaving scandals of that period.

It took many years of investigation to reveal the full extent of these schemes and fixes.

32 players were ultimately implicated in the fixing of 86 games in 17 states. Hundreds of innocent teammates were hurt by these scandals.

Now 50 years later, the supporters of this legislation wrongly believe that changing the law will somehow prevent point shaving schemes and other “fixes” in college sports.

But it isn't Nevada that is the problem, it is the illegal bookies and widespread illegal gambling that occurs elsewhere that is to blame.

I am here to strongly tell you that Nevada's legal sports books actually keep college sports honest.

Let me tell you why.

They help uncover schemes and fixes by picking up suspicious betting activity. Legal bookies, in fact, act as a safety valve to blow the whistle on a fixed game.

In 1994, Nevada's sports books were the ones who tipped off the NCAA and legal authorities that possible point shaving was taking place at Arizona State.

They informed PAC-10 officials and the FBI before the game was over about possible point shaving in the game against Washington.

That's why it's hard for me to understand why the NCAA now wants to destroy the system that provides them with critical information on college sports.

The NCAA has never single-handedly uncovered a point-shaving or game-fixing scandal. The NCAA even credits Nevada's sports books with helping to uncover recent point shaving schemes.

Right now Nevada's sports books provides one of the most consistent protections for coaches, players, and their sports programs.

What Nevada also can do is take a game off the board because of betting patterns and irregularities.

When the game is taken off of the board, it's a spotlight on that game – and a red light for all coaches – and particularly for the two coaches of the teams involved.

It also frightens the fixers.

Nevada's power to take a game off of the board is the ultimate deterrent against fixers. It can trigger the investigation of the players who could then finger the fixer.

Let me be clear, I am strongly opposed to gambling on college basketball. I know the effects gambling can have on individual players and the damage it can cause to the coach and his program. But it would be a mistake to get rid of a system that has proven its worth since 1975.

Getting rid of college sports betting in Nevada could invite back the far-reaching scandals that plagued college basketball in the 40s, 50s, and 60s.

The teams involved with those scandals had talented players, Hall of Fame coaches, and the support of their universities. But, even the best coaches and college presidents did not prevent interference from those outside fixers.

We should never return to those times.

The current system is not completely failsafe, but it is the only protection that exists.

This bill would take that away.

So finally, let me leave you with this. An old Irish expression goes, "Beware of trading the devil you know for the devil you don't."

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to present my position on this legislation. I would be happy to take any questions you may have at this time.